DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 297 511 EC 210 362

AUTHOR Groshong, Claudia Clark
TITLE Teaching Group Participation Skills to the Learning Disabled: A Key to Effective Mainstreaming.
PUB DATE 26 Feb 88
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the International Conference of the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities (Las Vegas, NV, February 24-27, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Problems; Critical Thinking; *Discussion (Teaching Technique); Grade 5; *Group Discussion; Independent Study; Interaction; Intermediate Grades; *Learning Disabilities; Listening Skills; Reading Materials; Skill Development; Student Behavior; Student Motivation; *Student Participation; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS *Behavior Management; *Great Books Curriculum

ABSTRACT

Junior Great Books discussions were used to teach critical thinking skills and independent learning behaviors to learning-disabled 5th-grade students. In baseline observations, the seven learning-disabled students exhibited active off-task behaviors and disruptive behavior causing dismissal from the group, while seven students in a "regular" group voluntarily followed teacher directions. Three skills were identified as important to sharing ideas effectively: listening, turn-taking, and expressing opinions supported by story facts. While the regular students quickly integrated these techniques into their discussions, special students needed to be motivated to control their behavior in order to begin using the listening and discussion skills. A behavior management program was instituted, which brought about decreases in off-task behaviors and interruptions. Analysis of program data showed a dramatic increase in average length of response for both groups over the course of the Great Book series. The special group acquired the group interaction, listening, and discussion skills necessary to have extended discussions. A series of skills hierarchies is presented, in the areas of group interaction, listening, discussion, and thinking. Establishing an effective group interaction structure seemed to be the key to achieving progress in all the skill areas essential to successful discussions. (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED297511

TEACHING GROUP PARTICIPATION SKILLS TO THE LEARNING DISABLED: A KEY TO EFFECTIVE MAINSTREAMING

Claudia Clark Groshong, Ph.D.

A.C.L.D. International Conference
February 26, 1988
Las Vegas, Nevada

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM

The project I am about to share with you began when I took a training course to become a Junior Great Books discussion leader. Junior Great Books leaders facilitate critical thinking skills discussions. Before students come to the discussions they are required to read the assigned selection at least twice: the first time, just to enjoy the story, the second time, to concentrate on the way the author wove the parts of the story together. Stories are selections from classic literature, which deal with values and age-appropriate issues. Leaders are trained to elicit many different ideas from students by asking inferential and evaluative questions which do not have one right answer. For example, to begin discussing Alice in Wonderland, the leader might ask, "Why does Alice have to become lost in Wonderland in order to find herself?"

EC 210362

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Claudia Groshong
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

During the training workshop, it bothered me that this program was designed primarily for 'gifted' students. I felt that all students would benefit from this type of thinking, listening and evaluating experience. The program seemed particularly relevant for special education students who frequently miss class discussions due to poor attention, disruptive behavior or time spent in resource room remediation (Kaufman, 1985; Gearheart and Weishahn, 1984). While this remediation has been effective in raising achievement test scores, it has produced students who depend on individual tutoring and have few group participation skills essential to success in the mainstream (Bond, Tinker, Wasson and Wasson 1984; McConaughy and Ritter, 1986; McConaughy, 1986; Epstein, Cullinan, and Nieminen, 1984; Meltzer, Levine, Karniski, Palfrey, and Clarke, 1984; Pihl and McLaron, 1984). The need for successful techniques to teach critical thinking skills and independent learning behaviors to learning disabled students has been documented by many sources (Fraenkel, 1973; Ennis, 1985; Palincsar and Brown, 1986; Raphael, 1985 and 1986; Bristow, 1985; Gaskins and Baron, 1985; Nolte and Singer, 1985; Hahn, 1985; Manning, 1984; Raphael and McKinney, 1983; Hansen and Pearson, 1983). Consequently, I began Great Books discussions with students of various reading levels to identify skills that facilitate group participation and to provide direct instruction in these skills to special education students.

PROCEDURES AND RESULTS

The first two 'pilot' groups were from a fifth grade classroom. All students in the class participated except those receiving special education services. Mainstream time was provided for all students to read the selections to be discussed. Discussions were about 45 minutes long. Each discussion was tape recorded in order to analyze the components of a successful discussion. After working with the pilot groups for 6 weeks, 2 additional Great Books groups began meeting, (1) the 'regular' group, composed of 7 students from another fifth grade classroom at the same public school, and (2) the 'special' group, composed of all students [n=7] from both classes who were receiving Chapter I or resource room reading services. In addition to mainstream reading time, resource and reading specialists helped to prepare special students for the weekly discussions. The data collected during the pilot study and 8 weeks with these two groups has helped me become a more effective discussion leader. I would like to share conclusions made from analysis of this data and from teaching group participation skills to some 100 students, grades 2 to 5, since the pilot study. I will compare good and poor discussion groups, present hierarchies of skills that emerged from the data, and share the teaching and motivational strategies that I have used to encourage students to progress to higher levels in the skill hierarchies.

To compare the special and regular groups, data was gathered from the following sources: (1) observations of group discussions in each participating classroom, (2) observations of Great Books discussions, and (3) tape-recordings of the Great Books groups. [An

attitude inventory was also administered, but results were inconclusive because special students gave 'teacher-acceptable' responses, rather than sharing their true feelings about reading and discussing.]

Observations of classroom discussions were made prior to and following the Great Books series, to determine whether the skills taught in the course were generalized to other discussion settings. The following were recorded every 2 minutes for each student during classroom and Great Books discussions:

Behaviors	Responses
Raises Hand	Volunteered
Eyes on Task/Speaker	Called on
Passively on Task (Eyes off task, but attending)	Student Question Appropriate
* Actively Off Task	Inappropriate
* Dismissed from Group (Due to Disruptive Behavior)	* 'Put Down'

The 3 starred behaviors differentiated the special and regular students best in baseline observations and highlighted the progress of special students best in evaluation data. Actively off-task behaviors were significant disruptors in baseline observations, but were infrequent in classroom observations made at the end of the series. (Figure 1) During the latter observations, no students were asked to leave class discussions due to disruptive behavior; whereas, 4 special students had been removed from the first classroom discussions observed.

Observations of the Great Books groups and analysis of the tape-recordings were done to compare typical responses, teacher and peer interactions and progress in the two groups. Additional response categories that were recorded during these discussions or emerged from the transcribed tapes follow:

FIGURE 1

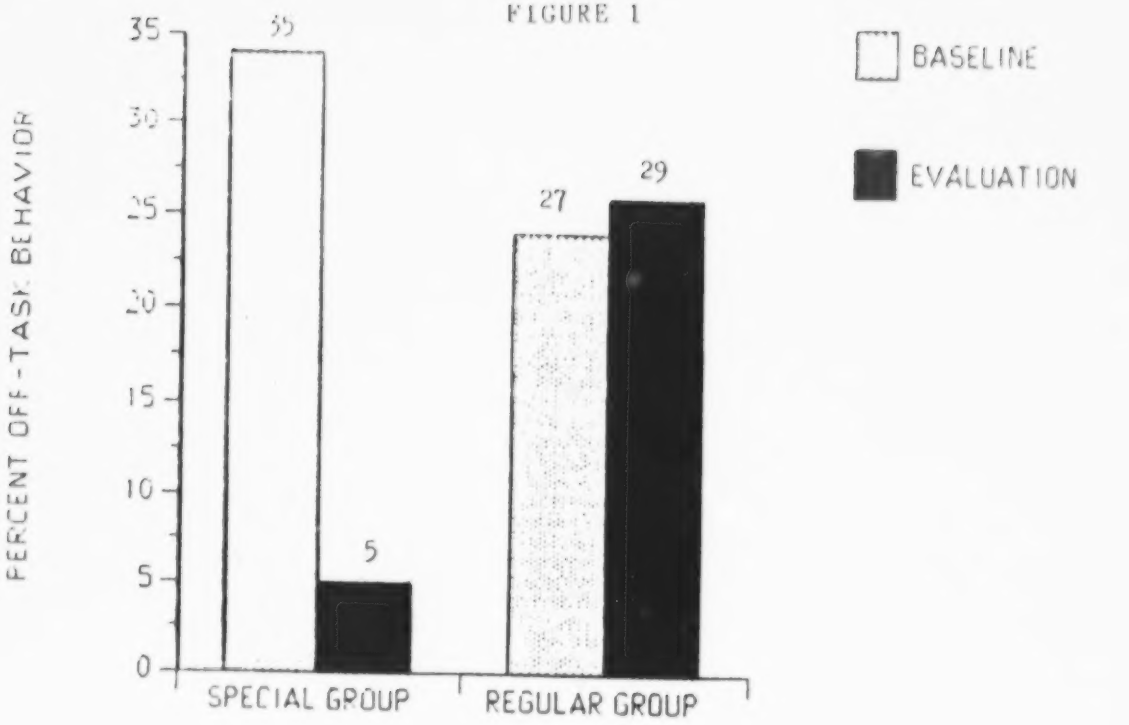
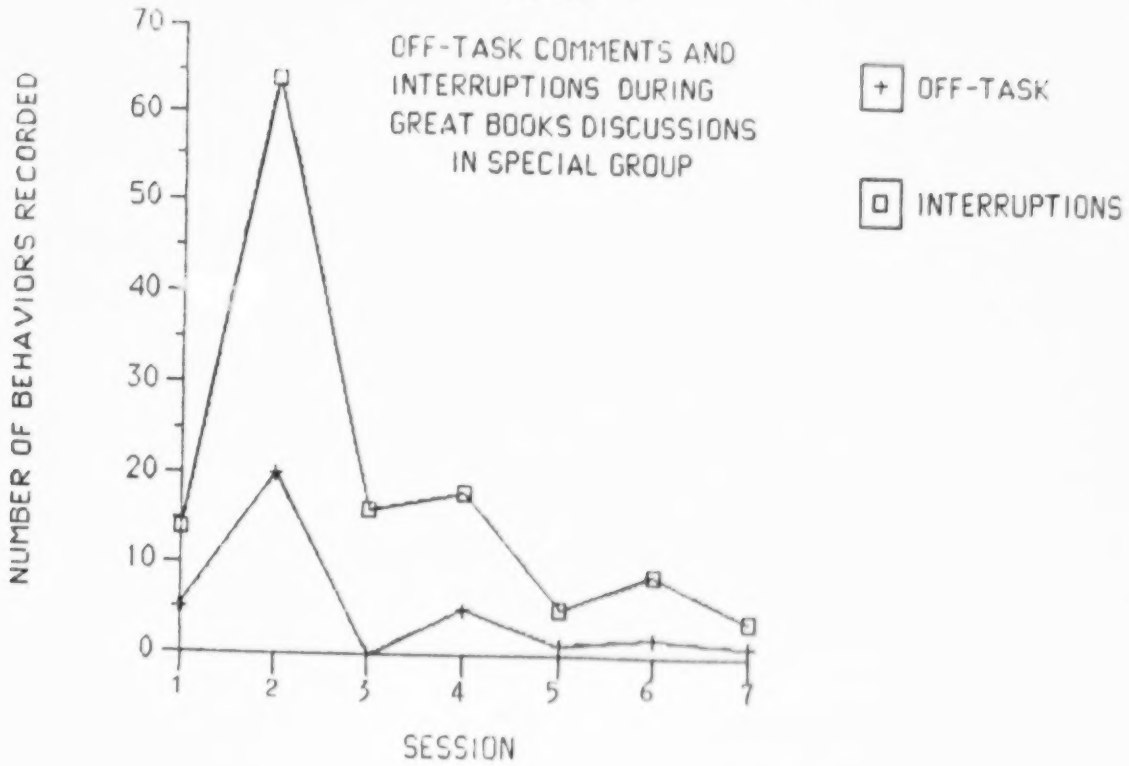


FIGURE 2



Student Responses	Teacher Responses
* Off-task Comments	Paraphrases
* Interruptions (Call-outs and Simultaneous Talking)	Supportive Statements
Vague Responses	Repetitions
Inaccurate Responses	Question Types:
Factual Responses	Interpretive
Agreement	Evaluative
New Opinions	Factual
Changed Opinions	Reference
* Reference Cited/Read	
Unsupported Responses (Opinions, Conjectures, or Interpretations without Facts)	
* Integrated Responses (Opinions, Conjectures, or Interpretations with Facts) (Multiple Opinions Linked)	
* Resolution of Differing Opinions	

Again, starred items were most significant in differentiating the special and regular groups initially and in highlighting the progress made during the Great Books series. Unstarred items showed no significant differences between groups in baseline and evaluative data.

From the pilot study, 3 skills had been identified as important to sharing ideas effectively: listening, turn taking, and using the sentence frame, "I think...because...", to encourage students to express an opinion supported by a fact from the story. These 3 skills have been introduced as a 'magic formula' for good discussions at the first session of each new group I have led. Most regular students very quickly integrate these techniques into their discussions. However, it was evident in early sessions with the special group that these students needed to be motivated to control their behavior before they could begin to use these listening and discussion skills.

Figure 2 shows the frequency of off-task behaviors and interruptions in each of the special group discussions. During the

first session, special students were quite apprehensive and resistant, as is typical when learning disabled students approach any new teacher or learning environment. All of their counterproductive behavior and responses were accentuated during the second session when the setting, teachers and procedures were more familiar. Their off-task behaviors and interruptions included negative comments ("Don't come. Do we have to do this?"), suspicious and insecure comments ("Why don't you just tell us the answers? You told us somebody would read the stories to us and they made us read it ourselves."), distracting behaviors (giggling, whistling, whispers, snores, many physical complaints, references to dismissal, "Can we go? Is it lunch time?"), and derogatory comments about peers ("Adam shouldn't be in this. Cheryl knows everything.")

The dramatic decrease in off-task behaviors and interruptions during the third special group session was the result of the following:

Behavior Management Program

GOAL: To attend movie party at the end of the discussion series.

CRITERIA: Must earn 10 points per session to attend.
If earn 15 points per session, can invite a friend to movie.
If earn 20 points per session, can invite 2 friends, etc.

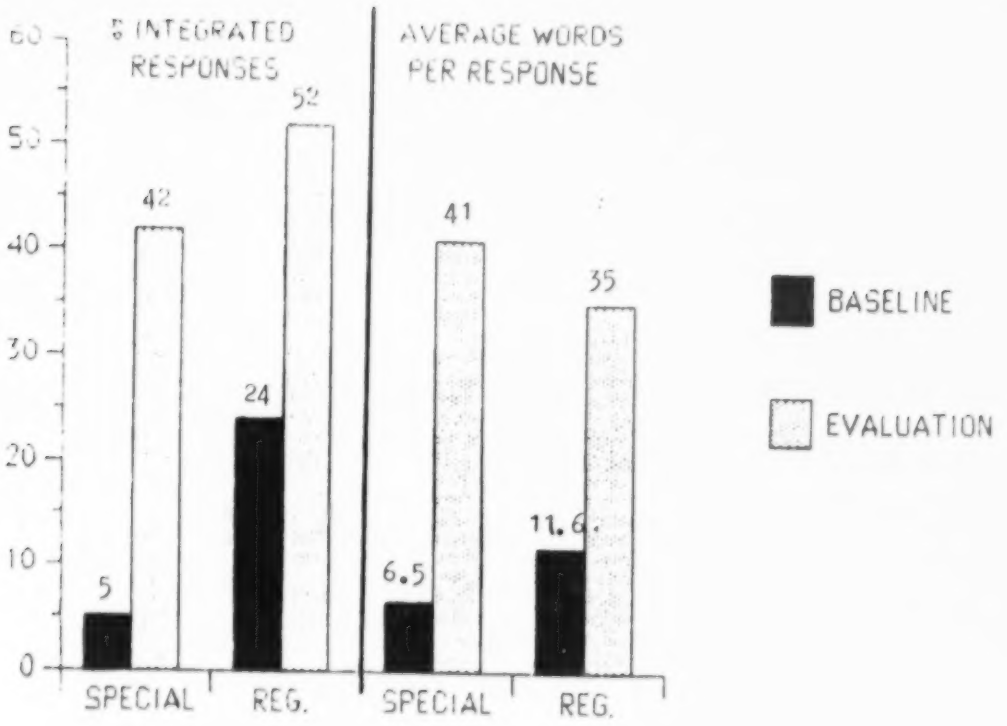
TARGET SKILLS FOR ALL STUDENTS' POINTS:
Behavior: Raise hand politely.
Participation: Share an idea with support from story (I think...because...)

TARGET SKILLS FOR INDIVIDUAL STUDENT POINTS:
Preparation: Read story twice and come on time with book.
Behavior: Raise hand only when have an idea or reference.
No 'call-outs'.
Participation: Share an idea.
Share something from the story that supports an idea.
(Students were given lists of their individual goals and the points they would receive for each, determined by the difficulty each student had wth each targeted skill.)

Although interruptions were not eliminated by this program, their character changed from off-task remarks to over-anxious, on-task responses. The management program was effective in motivating the special students to control their disruptive behavior and in encouraging them to use effective listening and discussion skills for the remainder of the series, although they did 'test the system' during the fourth discussion. Regular students, however, were somewhat distracted and demotivated by the behavior management program. Some became anxious about how they could meet the expectations and occasionally interrupted discussions to ask about their point totals. Others decided that the reinforcers were not worth the effort required to achieve them.

Analysis of tape-recordings showed that there was a dramatic increase in average length of responses for both groups over the course of the Great Books series. (Figure 3) Regular students were somewhat more adept at expressing their thoughts clearly and concisely. Consequently, their average length of response at the end of the course was slightly shorter than special students' responses. Response length was increased in both groups because all students had learned to integrate opinion with story facts in their responses. (Figure 3) The following chart summarizes the behavior and responses characteristics of the regular and special groups from the baseline and evaluation data. It shows that the special group, at the end of 7 Great Books discussions, had acquired the group interaction, listening and discussion skills necessary to have extended discussions of each question presented.

FIGURE 3



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Comparison of Group Behavior and Responses

Regular Education Group	Special Education Group
Baseline Behavior Characteristics	
Eager, interested	Resistant, apprehensive
Prepared	Several unprepared
Wait to speak with few interruptions	Call-out responses
	Off-task interruptions
No 'put-downs' of peers or activity	'Put downs'of peers/activity
No requests for dismissal	Frequent dismissal requests
Baseline Response Characteristics	
Responses averaged 11.6 words	Responses averaged 6.5 words
24% integrated fact and opinion	5% integrated fact and opinion
Ideas connected with key words	Loosely connected facts
Agreement/disagreement supported by facts	Agreement/disagreement based on peer alliances
Interest in novel ideas	Rigid opinions and judgements
Discussed 2-4 questions	Discussed 7-10 questions
4-5 Opinions per question	1-2 Opinions per question
1 Reference cited	No References cited
Evaluation Behavior Characteristics	
Less motivated to attend movie	Eager, interested, motivated
Several unprepared	Most prepared
	No 'put downs'
	On-task interruptions
All leave when dismissed	4 continue discussing after dismissal
Evaluation Response Characteristics	
Responses clear and concise	Responses lack key words
Responses averaged 35 words	Responses averaged 41 words
52% integrated fact and opinion	42% integrated fact/opinion
8 References cited	6 References cited
4 Resolutions of differing opinions	5 Resolutions
Discussed 4-5 questions	Discussed 4-5 questions
4-5 Opinions per question	3-5 Opinions per question

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

A series of skills hierarchies (Figure 4) emerged from analysis of the data. The behaviors of special students prior to the behavior management program were prime examples of disorder and resistance, the lowest stage of group interactions. These students needed to be externally motivated to interact as a group before discussions could progress. However, regular students began the series at the third group interaction stage, Traditional Order. When the behavior management system was introduced, these students, who had

FIGURE 4

SKILL HIERARCHIES

GROUP INTERACTION STAGES
INTRINSIC ORDER
Cooperative student structure for taking turns
TRADITIONAL ORDER
Voluntarily follow teacher direction
EXTRINSIC ORDER
Teacher imposed structure with tangible reinforcers
DISORDER/RESISTANCE
Negative interactions
Chaos
LISTENING STAGES
EAGER LISTENING
Respond more to peers ideas than to leader. Integrate many ideas.
SUSTAINED LISTENING
Begin to comment on peers ideas as well as sharing their own.
INTERMITTENT LISTENING
Respond to leader's questions with few comments on peers' ideas
MINIMAL LISTENING
Respond to off-task comments more than on-task responses
DISCUSSION STAGES
INTEGRATED RESPONSES
Key words; Resolve differing opinions
Changes of opinion
SUPPORTIVE RESPONSES
Opinions, agreements and disagreements supported by facts
DEFENSIVE RESPONSES
Unsupported opinions, arguments and judgements
DISJOINTED RESPONSES
Unconnected strings of facts; Undefined pronouns; Unclear ideas
THINKING STAGES
EVALUATION
Accept many possibilities; Consider personal value of ideas
SYNTHESIS
Make logical connections between ideas and facts, unrealistic facts and context, differing ideas
CONCRETE INTERPRETATION
Reject unrealistic parts of story; Ideas based on concrete experiences
RECALL
Literal acceptance of facts; Hesitant to offer opinion

voluntarily followed teacher direction, reacted with confusion and some insecurity. The system's goal was to motivate behaviors and skills this group already had, and was therefore inappropriate for them, especially since it forced them to interact at a less mature group interaction stage.

Since this study, I have begun special education groups with a management program to reinforce effective behavior in discussions. Once students become involved enough in the discussions, external motivators are reduced and the group is transitioned into a traditional structure of voluntary cooperation. Regular groups begin with the traditional structure, but are encouraged to adopt an intrinsic group structure. Skills essential to intrinsic order are (1) to take turns without raising hands by listening for completed statements, (2) to notice and include peers who need to be brought into the discussion, (3) to ask each other questions and (4) to resolve interruptions by voluntarily giving the floor to a peer. Participation in this type of 'adult' discussion has proved to be very motivating for regular education students.

The behavior dichotomy between special and regular education groups determined the level of performance of each group in the listening, discussion and thinking skill hierarchies. Regular students usually were able to perform at the third level in each hierarchy by following teacher guidelines for interactions and effective types of responses. Most special students began the discussion series at the lowest level of each hierarchy. However, when a management program was initiated at the first Great Books session with later groups, special students were able to perform at

the second stage of listening, discussion and thinking skills and to progress fairly rapidly into the two higher stages of each hierarchy in the following discussions. Thus, establishing an effective group interaction structure seems to be the key to progress in all skill areas essential to successful discussions.

Although the behavior management system had the most pervasive effect on group performance initially, many other teaching strategies were keys to motivating individual participation and progress to higher levels of discussion and thinking skill hierarchies. The techniques summarized in Figure 5 allowed special students, who began the Great Books series with few listening or discussion skills, to enthusiastically participate in positive, integrated, high-level discussions at the end of the series. In fact, 4 of the special students involved in the initial study voluntarily remained and continued the last two discussions for 10 to 15 minutes after dismissal for lunch. This was a sharp contrast to their impatience and constant requests for early dismissal in early discussions.

This study has identified some group interaction, listening, discussion and thinking skills that are important to integrating special education students into the mainstream. Comparisons of the behavior and responses of special and regular education students in Great Books groups have shown that special students need and benefit from direct instruction in these skills. The skill hierarchies and teaching techniques that have emerged from this project may serve as guidelines for preparing learning disabled students to participate successfully in large group settings.

FIGURE 5
TEACHING AND MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

A. Participation
   1. Groups that are part of the regular classroom curriculum are most effective. If this is impossible, use an elective group structure with a 6-8 week committment.
   2. Allow students to choose their long term reward for participation.
   3. Emphasize the novel qualities of this program:
      - Students are encouraged to have adults read the story to them during at least one of the readings.
      - Questions asked by the leader have many possible good answers. Everyone's idea is valuable. Differences of opinion are sought.
      - Leader does not answer questions, only asks them.

B. Preparation
   1. Use short stories and story segments.
   2. Students who have not read the story twice may listen to, but not participate in, the discussion. Preparation is encouraged by verbal reinforcement and by keeping records of student preparation.
   3. Reward extra preparation, such as note taking, student written inferential questions, author research. Students are pleased when told their question is similar to one the leader wrote and when the discussion is begun with their question.

C. Discussion Skills
   1. Reinforce positive peer interactions, effective listening and discussion techniques with verbal recognition, notes on seating chart, and points if needed. Refer to prior responses when asking a question.
   2. Model successful methods of responding and disagreeing
      - I think...because...
      - I disagree with ....because...
      - I got a different idea from this part of the story.
   3. Model scanning skills to locate references that support ideas.
   4. Question students to encourage reference citing.
      - What in the story made you think that?
      - Could you find that part of the story and check to see if...
   5. Paraphrase student responses
   6. Question students to elicit specific vocabulary and clarify responses

D. Thinking Skills
   1. Use inferential and evaluative questions
   2. Think Time: a 3-5 minute period after the first question is presented, in which students think and make notes about their response and story facts that support it.
   3. Encourage integration of personal experience into the discussion
   4. Question students about parallels or contrasts in the details of various parts of the story.
   5. Reinforce novel ideas, attempts to integrate 2 ideas, and changes of opinion with verbal recognition and notes on seating chart
   6. Highlight disagreements and contradictions supported by facts and encourage resolution of those problems by questioning

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Atwell, N. (1986) In the Middle: teaching reading, writing and learning as a process to adolescents; Boynton-Cook Publishers, Inc.; Upper Montclair, N.J. 07043

Bond, G.L., M.A. Tinker, B.B. Wasson and J.B. Wasson (1984) Reading Difficulties: their diagnosis and correction. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey.

Bristow, P.S. (1985) Are poor readers passive readers? Some evidence, possible explanations, and potential solutions. The Reading Teacher, 39(3), 318-125.

Ennis, R.H. (1985) A logical basis for measuring critical thinking skills. Educational Leadership, 43(2), 45-48.

Epstein, M.H., D. Cullinan, and G. Nieminen (1984) Social behavior problems of learning disabled and normal girls. Journal of Learning disabilities, 17(10), 609-611.

Fraenkel, J.R. (1973) Helping Students Think and Value. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New Jersey.

Gaskins, I.W. and J. Baron (1985) Teaching poor readers to cope with maladaptive cognitive styles: a training program. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 18(7), 390-394.

Gearheart, B.R. and M.W. Weishahn (1984) The Exceptional Student in the Regular Classroom. Third Edition. Times Mirror/Mosby College Publishing, St. Louis.

Great Books Foundation; 40 East Huron Street; Chicago, Il. 60611.

Hahn, A.L. (1985) Teaching remedial students to be strategic readers and better comprehenders. The Reading Teacher, 39(1), 72-77.

Hansen, J. and P.D. Pearson (1983) An instructional study: improving the inferential comprehension of good and poor fourth-grade readers. Journal of Educational Psychology, 75(6), 821-829.

Kauffman, J.M. Characteristics of Children's Behavior Disorders. Third Edition. Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., Ohio.

Manning, B.H. (1984) Problem-solving instruction as an oral comprehension aid for reading disabled third graders. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 17(8), 457-461.

McConaughy, S.H. (1986) Social competence and behaviiral problems of learning disabled boys aged 12-16. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19(2), 101-106.

McConaughy, S.H. and D.R. Ritter (1986) Social competence and behavioral problems of learning disabled boys aged 6-11. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 19(1), 39-44.

Meltzer, L.J., M.D. Levine, W. Karniski, J.S. Palfrey, and S. Clarke (1984) An analysis of the learning styles of adolescent delinquents. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 17(10), 600-608.

Nolte, R.Y. and H. Singer (1985) Active comprehension: teaching a process of reading comprehension and its effects on reading achievement. The Reading Teacher, 39(1), 24-31.

Palincsar, A.S. and A.L. Brown (1986) Interactive teaching to promote independent learning from text. The Reading Teacher, 39(8), 771-777.

Pihl, R.O. and L.D. McLaron (1984) Learning disabled children as adolescents. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 17(2), 96-99.

Raphael, T.E. (1985) Increasing students' awareness of sources of information for answering questions. American Educational Research Journal, 22(2), 217-235.

Raphael, T.E. (1986) Teaching question answer relationships, revisited. The Reading Teacher, 39(6), 516-523.

Raphael, T.E. and J. McKinney (1983) An examination of 5th and 8th grade children's question-answering behavior: an instructional study in metacognition. Journal of Reading Behavior, XV(3), 67-86.